

# wildlife habitat

## TAKE CARE OF THE SOIL FIRST

Erosion still tops the list of agricultural conservation issues. A conservation plan based on protection of the soil will also protect the other natural resources. Think about it! All natural resources are tied to the soil in one way or the other. When you lose topsoil, you lose organic matter that is vitally important to soil productivity, water conservation, carbon sequestration, animal health, and much more.

## WHERE DO YOU START

You can do a lot yourself by researching available literature, and reading your landscape signs to identify problems. Professional, common sense help in both planning and installing complete conservation systems is available upon request through your local conservation district from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS will have an abundance of information, and can provide on-site technical assistance.

## PLANNING FUNDAMENTALS

- **Know your soil** - Soil types vary widely. Different soils require different management and support different types of plants.
- **Know your plants** - Which plants will survive? Use native plants as often as possible.
- **Think about topography** - The size of the drainage area, slope, and cover will help determine how much runoff water to expect and how fast it will move.
- **Know how conservation practices work** - Grass, trees, downed logs, and rocks are all obstacles that slow down or reduce the forces of nature.

Conservation practices work the same way. If water erosion is the problem, the objective is to slow the moving water. If wind erosion is the problem, the objective is to slow the wind at or near the soil surface.

• **Scout** - Look around and see what's going on. If you have a gully problem, go out while it is raining and observe nature in action. Watch conservation practices to see if they are working as designed. If the practice isn't working, figure out why and try to fix it or request technical help to solve the problem.

Roger Hill



Food, cover and shelter in the winter are part of the planning considerations for wildlife habitat.



*technical help  
at no cost*

NRCS offers engineering and agronomic assistance in helping owners plan, apply and complete conservation systems.



## TECHNICAL HELP AVAILABLE

Making a plan and following through to protect the entire farm can seem to be a huge task, and intimidating at first. That's where the Natural Resources Conservation Service comes in. NRCS has more than 60 years of experience in helping landowners plan and install conservation practices to reduce soil erosion; improve soil, water, and air quality; improve and restore wetlands; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; improve pasture; reduce upstream flooding; and improve woodlands. If you already have a plan, but it doesn't address all natural resource problems on the farm, NRCS will help you revise your plan. NRCS is the country's premier conservation agency, with offices in most local counties. All people who use the land may receive technical help from NRCS at no charge. And NRCS can help direct you to sources of financial cost-share help or incentive programs of both public and private agencies to establish conservation measures on your land. NRCS works closely with the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the State of Iowa's Division of Soil Conservation. Become a district cooperator to take full advantage of programs available.

Contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Conservation District office for more information. Or, find us on the web at [www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/)

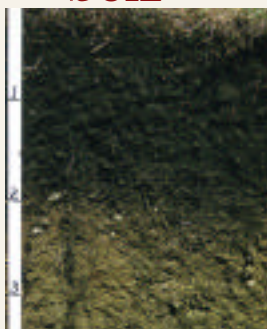
Conservation systems consider the offsite effects of actions on the farm, including improvements to overall water quality.



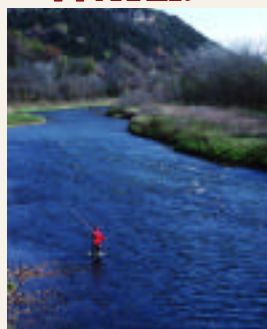
**NRCS helps people protect all the natural resources on the farm.**



## SOIL



## WATER



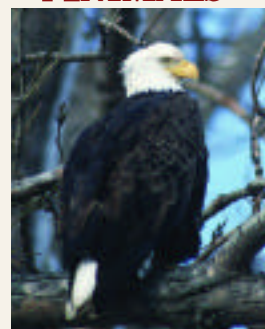
## AIR



## PLANTS



## ANIMALS



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